DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 777 SP 039 234

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TITLE	Motivations for the Career Choice of Preservice Teachers in New South Wales, Australia and Ontario, Canada.
PUB DATE	2000-04-00
NOTE	19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Career Choice; Educational Change; Elementary Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Preservice Teachers; *Student Motivation; *Teaching (Occupation)
IDENTIFIERS	Australia (New South Wales); Ontario

ABSTRACT

This study investigated and compared the reasons given by 40 preservice teachers in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, and Ontario, Canada, for their career choice, focusing on whether their motivations reflected the marked difference in the status and remuneration of teachers in NSW and Ontario. Preservice teachers participated in in-depth, focused, individual interviews in which they were asked to tell a little about themselves and why they decided to become teachers. The NSW students completed interviews during their first year of enrollment, and the Ontario students completed interviews at the beginning of their second year. Data analysis highlighted four categories of reasons: (1) little sense of personal agency (e.g., teaching by default or chance); (2) teaching as a means of gaining personal agency; (3) teaching as a means of assisting others to gain agency; and (4) self as a reform agent. The NSW student teachers had more diverse motivations than did their counterparts in Ontario, who mostly cited a vocation for teaching. In general, the responses of the Ontario preservice teachers indicated higher perceptions of personal agency than did those of the NSW preservice teachers, possibly a reflection of the higher professional status and salaries accorded teachers in Ontario. (Contains 41 references.) (SM)

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MOTIVATIONS FOR THE CAREER CHOICE OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA AND ONTARIO, CANADA

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Motivations for the Career Choice of Preservice Teachers in New South Wales, Australia and Ontario, Canada

Abstract
Using a continuum of personal agency as a scaffold, this paper report findings of an investigation of the motivations for teaching of 20 prospective teachers enrolled in a preservice program in Ontario, Canada, and 20 prospective teachers in New South Wales, Australia. The NSW participants reported more diverse motivations than their Ontario counterparts, who mostly cited a vocation for teaching. In general, the responses of the Ontario preservice teachers indicated higher perceptions of personal agency than those of the NSW preservice teachers — possibly a reflection of the higher professional status and salaries accorded teachers in Ontario.

1. Introduction

The extensive research literature in teacher education has identified many issues of global relevance and highlighted the need for a systematic international research agenda (Lock & Churukian, 1995; Leavitt, 1991). One item that warrants inclusion on such an agenda is teacher recruitment and selection. As Lock and Churukian (1995, p. 2) ask: "Who are the people who wish to become teachers and why do they choose teaching as a career?" Addressing these questions is variously assumed to provide insight into teacher recruitment, commitment, retention, and attrition (Alexander, Chant & Cox, 1994; Fresko, Kfir & Nassar, 1997; Serow, 1994); the "quality" and "suitability" of prospective teachers (Smith & Pratt; 1996; Young, 1995); and the continuing under-representation of minority groups in the teaching profession (Shaw, 1996; Su, 1996).

2. A brief overview of previous studies

The long tradition of research into prospective teachers' reasons for their career choice in North America (for useful overviews see Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Joseph & Green, 1986; Tusin, 1999), and to a lesser extent, in other Western industrialized countries (e.g., Alexander et al., 1994; Johnstone, McKeown & McEwen, 1999) has been complemented in recent years by studies in less industrialized societies such as the Caribbean (Brown, 1992), Brunei Darussalam (Chui Seng Yong, 1995) and Zimbabwe (Chivore, 1988). The relatively few comparative studies of prospective teachers' motivations for selecting teaching, however, mostly appear to have been undertaken within, rather than across, national boundaries. To date, these intra-national studies have focused on the motivations of prospective teachers from different socio-cultural and socio-economic backgrounds (Su, 1996; Weiner, Swearingen, Pagano & Obi, 1993), gender (Johnston et al., 1999; Montecinos & Nielson, 1997), life stages (Serow, Eaker & Forrest, 1994); or preferred teaching specialisations (Book & Freeman, 1986).

Most previous investigations have found that prospective teachers are motivated primarily by altruistic reasons (such as a desire to share one's knowledge, to make a difference to children's lives or to contribute to society), although material benefits (such as job security and working hours) are sometimes influential (Brown, 1992; Chui Seng Yong, 1995; Young, 1995). Typically, however, these studies have relied

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Sumsion, J. (2000, April). *Motivations for the Career Choice of Preservice Teachers in New South Wales, Australia and Ontario, Canada*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

on survey methods that have accepted at face value the self-reported motivations of prospective teachers and provided little opportunity to probe more deeply into their responses (Serow, Eaker & Forrest, 1994). The methodological limitations of these studies caution against the uncritical acceptance of their findings (Joseph & Green, 1986; Serow et al., 1994). Indeed, Huberman's (1993) land mark study involving in-depth interviews with experienced Swiss secondary school teachers about their retrospective motivations for teaching indicated a complex mix of "active" (including altruistic), "materialistic" and "passive" reasons for pursuing a teaching career.

The more common assumption in the teacher education literature that prospective teachers are motivated mainly by altruism contradicts market-responsive theories (e.g., Young, 1995 citing Ochsner & Soloman, 1979; Brown, 1984) that posit that career decisions "can be understood as an economic decision made in accordance with the dictates of the labor market" (Serow & Forrest, 1994, p. 556). In other words, these theories contend, people tend to be attracted to occupations that are in high demand, and that enable them to maximize earnings. The pervasiveness of economic rationalism and the accompanying materialistic ethos underpinning many contemporary societies may mean that extrinsic rewards (or lack thereof) are increasingly relevant to prospective teachers' decision-making (Shaw, 1996). This prospect has encouraged speculation about a possible relationship between compensation levels and altruism in the motivation of prospective teachers. Could the relatively modest material rewards offered to teachers in many countries suggest few reasons for entering teaching other than for altruistic reasons (Joseph & Green, 1986; Shaw, 1996)? Conversely, might competitive salaries attract prospective teachers who are motivated mainly by extrinsic rewards (Chui Seng Yong, 1995)?

3. Contrasting professional contexts for teachers in New South Wales, Australia and Ontario, Canada

Despite substantial historical differences, Australia and Canada share many socio-cultural, economic and political similarities. The discrepancy between the professional status and salaries of teachers in New South Wales and Ontario (respectively the most populous and wealthiest state and province of each country), therefore, is noteworthy. Moreover, this discrepancy provided an opportunity for a comparative study of prospective teachers' motivations for their career choice with potential to inform speculation about possible connections between altruism and compensation levels.

Smith & Pratt (1996), although overlooking that the relative standard of living of Canadian teachers and that entry qualifications for preservice teacher education programs vary from province to province, note:

> Teaching is an attractive profession in Canada. Eligible applicants to teacher education programs typically outnumber available places by 4:1.... In Canada, teaching confers high occupational status, [and] professional salaries and working conditions ... .The status of teaching in Canada is apparent from the Canadian Sociological Index of Occupations (Bilshen, Carroll & Moore, 1987) ... which ranks the occupational status of elementary school teachers higher than the status of commissioned officers, members of legislative bodies, social workers, and speech therapists. Secondary school teachers ranked higher than aerospace engineers, architects, pharmacists and psychologists." (p.43).

Although international salary comparisons are difficult due to differences in costs of living and taxation, official statistics indicate that "teachers' gross salaries in Ontario are 25% to 30% more than those in the United States" (Smith & Pratt, 1996, p. 43). Calculations regularly undertaken by the New South Wales Teachers Federation suggest a similar differential between teachers' salaries in Ontario and New South Wales. Despite the election in 1995 of a Provincial Government in Ontario that has pursued a strong economic rationalist agenda and adversarial educational policies (Begin, 1999; Knowles, 1999), the status and material benefits accorded teachers in Ontario, still considerably exceed those accorded Australian teachers. Throughout Australia, teaching is not a highly regarded career choice for academically able students and many teacher education programs struggle to fill their enrolment quotas (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1998).

3. Purpose and context of the study

The purpose of the study reported in this paper was to investigate and compare the reasons given by preservice teachers in New South Wales (NSW) and Ontario for their career choice. A particular focus was to explore whether these prospective teachers' motivations reflected the marked difference in the status and remuneration of teachers in NSW and Ontario. Of the 40 participating prospective teachers, 20 were enrolled in a preservice teacher education program in NSW and 20 in a similar program in Ontario. Each program was widely regarded as the pre-eminent teacher education program for prospective teachers of children aged from birth to eight years (in NSW) and from three to 12 years (in Ontario) in its respective state / province*.

The NSW program, offered by a medium-sized metropolitan university, led to a four-year Bachelor of Education degree (Early Childhood) degree, with graduates typically finding employment in childcare centers, preschools, and the early years of school (kindergarten to Grade 2). Despite their early childhood specialization, however, many graduates entering the school system were assigned middle and upper primary (elementary) grades. The Ontario program, offered on the city campus of the province's oldest and most prestigious university, led to a two-year post-graduate Diploma in Child Study, with graduates generally seeking employment in elementary schools, where salaries were considerably higher than in childcare centers and nursery schools. In 1997, when the data collection phase of the study was completed, employment prospects for new graduates in the school systems in both countries were poor, while the employment prospects for NSW graduates in childcare centers and preschools were excellent.

Both preservice programs shared a philosophical commitment to cross-disciplinary studies in psychology, sociology and education to assist preservice teachers to develop an understanding of the individual child within the context of society, and to fostering reflective practice as a foundation for ongoing professional development. Entry to the NSW program was on the basis of the tertiary entrance ranking (TER) obtained in the Higher School Certificate examination undertaken at the end of secondary schooling, although some alternative pathways were available to mature age students. A TER of 60, out of a possible 100, was the minimum entry requirement. In comparison, entry to medicine, regarded in Australia as a much more prestigious profession than teaching, generally required a TER of at least 99. Entry to the Ontario preservice program, on the other hand, required an A- / B+ average

(generally translating to a minimum 85% average) in an undergraduate degree, typically undertaken at honors level. As well, prospective students were required to submit a portfolio documenting previous work experience with children and outlining why they considered themselves suited to teaching. They were also interviewed by a panel of faculty members. Each year, approximately 14% of applicants were admitted to the program. The entry requirements for this program were only slightly less competitive than those required for entry into medical schools in Ontario.

4. Research design

The study was undertaken from a constructivist perspective that gives priority to understanding how individuals make sense of their lives and the meaning they assign to their decisions and actions (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). As such, it contributes to a small but growing literature of naturalistic studies of prospective teachers' career choices (e.g., Behrens, 1997; Serow, 1994; Shaw, 1996) that probe beyond the surface-level understandings typically elicited by survey responses.

4.1. Participants

The 20 preservice teachers from Ontario and the 20 preservice teachers from NSW who volunteered to take part in the study constituted approximately 33% and 10% of their respective cohorts. Although it was not intended that the participants be representative of their respective cohorts, there is little reason to suggest that those in either group were markedly dissimilar from their peers. The Ontario preservice teachers ranged in age from 23 years to 37 years, with a mean of 26.0 years; the NSW preservice teachers from 18 to 43 years, with a mean of 21.3 years. Three Canadian and two Australian participants were male. The participants from both programs came from a diversity of socio-cultural backgrounds, although the largest identifiable subgroups were Anglo-Canadian women with a first degree in the humanities or social sciences (9 preservice teachers) and Anglo-Australian women who entered the preservice program as high school leavers (7 preservice teachers).

The educational backgrounds of the NSW participants were more varied than their Ontario counterparts — in part, a reflection of the entry requirements to the respective programs. Only two NSW preservice teachers held a first degree (in the humanities / social sciences) on entry to the program, although four had begun, but not completed, degrees elsewhere. Three had gained entry to the program through special consideration after failing to gain the required TER.

4.2. Data collection, analysis and representation

Each preservice teacher participated in an in-depth, focused, individual interview guided by the question: "Could you tell me a little about yourself, and why you decided to become a teacher?" The NSW preservice teachers were interviewed during their first year of enrolment; the Ontario preservice teachers at the beginning of their second year. The interviews ranged in duration from 25 to 75 minutes with a mean of 40 minutes. A teacher educator in the program in which the Australian participants were enrolled, I conducted and transcribed all the interviews and, to assist in maintaining authenticity of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1998), returned the transcripts to the participants for verification.

FIGURE 1

Reasons for Wanting to Teach: An Overview of the Responses of NSW and Ontario Preservice Teachers

Constellation 1 Little personal agency	**Constellation 2** Gaining personal agency	**Constellation 3** Assisting others to gain agency	**Constellation 4** Agent for reform
By chance *NSW*	To become more Empowered *NSW* *O*	To make a difference to children's lives *O O O O O O O*	To effect educational reform *O O*
By default *NSW NSW NSW NSW*	To meet emotional needs NSW NSW *O*	To contribute to society *O O O O*	To effect socio-political reform *NSW NSW NSW*
To fit anticipated life trajectory *NSW NSW*	To pursue lifestyle / career goals *NSW NSW NSW NSW* *O O*		
	To fulfill long-held ambition to teach *NSW NSW NSW* *O O O*		

Low **high**

Personal Agency Reflected in Responses

Notes:

1. *"NSW"* denotes a preservice teacher enrolled in the NSW program; *"O"* denotes a preservice teacher enrolled in the Ontario program.
2. The graduations in shading acknowledge the possibility that preservice teachers may have multiple motivations for teaching. For example, a preservice teachers' primary motivation might be to effect educational reform, but he / she might also be attracted to teaching because of its potential to meet emotional needs and to make a difference to children's lives.

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The interview transcripts were analysed using grounded theory techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These inductive processes involve constantly comparing and coding the data according to emerging categories and themes, continually checking and refining these, and identifying relationships between these categories and themes. Interpretation of the data was also informed by concepts identified in previous naturalistic studies of teachers' motivations for teaching and theories of career choice (see, for example, Field, Kehas & Tiedemann, 1963; Huberman, 1993; Holland, 1973; Ginzberg, 1988; Lent, Hackett & Brown, 1996) that draw attention to a variety of psychological, social, and contextual constructs.

These inductive processes enabled the identification of four constellations of reasons for these 40 prospective teachers' career choice. As shown in Figure 1, these constellations can be represented as a continuum reflecting varying perceptions of one's degree of personal agency. By *personal agency*, I mean a "capacity for self-direction" (Lent et al., p. 3) that enables one to select personally satisfying options that also have "social meaning and value" (Hansen, 1994, p. 263). As used here, then, personal agency incorporates notions of self-efficacy, and personal and social responsibility. Personal agency as a construct for exploring reasons for career choice is consistent with the tendency in many contemporary societies to see work "as a major part of one's personal identity and worth" (Brown, 1992, p.185). As Field et al. (1963) note, this nexus between work and identity suggests that people make career decisions that:

> fit their current notions of: (1) what they are like; (2) what they can be like; (3) what they want to be like; (4) what their situation is like; (5) what their situation might become; and finally (6) the way they see these aspects of self and situation as being related. (pp. 769-770)

Field et al.'s contribution is useful in that it encompasses diverse perspectives on career choice, all of which are potentially relevant to this study.

Using a continuum to represent reasons for choosing to teach can mask multiple motivations of individual participants (Young, 1995) — just as tabulating frequencies for differing motivations, a device used in many previous studies, can mask the respective weighting of each motivation. In this study, where different motivations seemed equally important to a preservice teacher, the response that reflected the highest degree of personal agency determined the constellation in which that preservice teachers' reasons for his / her career choice were located.

5. Findings

In this section, I describe the distinguishing features of each of the four constellations of reasons given by the participants for their career choice, and identify various clusters of reasons within each constellation. In doing so, I draw extensively on excerpts from the interview transcripts, selected partly for their eloquence but, more importantly, because they exemplified the responses included in each constellation and cluster. Figure 1 provides an overview of the distribution between and within these constellations and of the differing patterns of the responses given by preservice teachers in the NSW and Ontario programs.

5.1. Constellation 1: little sense of personal agency

The first constellation of reasons for teaching indicated little sense of personal agency. Encompassing the responses of seven participants (all from NSW), this constellation contained three distinct clusters.

5.1.1. Teaching by chance

The first of these clusters — *chance* — included responses that implied that career decisions had been influenced by forces beyond the prospective teacher's control. "It was by chance that I came to this course. I really wanted to be an artist", explained the 19-year-old whose response was included in this cluster. Like all participants, she expressed a liking for and enjoyment of children, but unlike the other participants, was unable to expand upon why she had chosen to teach.

Like Dolmage (1996), I contend that enjoying children's company is more a pre-requisite, than a reason *per se*, for choosing to teach, for there are many alternative personal and professional roles and capacities in which one might spend time with children. Conceivably, this preservice teacher's response might have reflected constraints on her career choice resulting from changed life circumstances arising from her family's decision to migrate to Australia from Taiwan during her senior years of high school. As Lent et al., (1996) remind us, contextual influences can impede the pursuit of one's preferred career option.

5.1.2. Teaching by default

A second, related cluster of reasons reflecting little sense of personal agency included deciding to teach *by default* — as exemplified by the comment: "There wasn't anything else I really wanted to do" (19 year old). The four preservice teachers (all female) from NSW whose responses were included in this cluster expressed little interest in teaching and saw their enrolment in the teacher education program as "a place holder" until, hopefully, a preferred option appeared. As one 18 year old said:

> I don't know what I want to do really. But I do know that I'm not doing this degree so that I can go and get a job as a teacher. I really want to do something much more exciting. I need to get this degree out of the way, and then something will happen after that.

Given the ease of entry to the NSW program, the likelihood that many high school leavers will not have a clear sense of their preferred career direction, and the tendency for teacher education programs to be perceived by many as an "option of last resort" (Serow & Forrest, 1994, p. 556), it was not surprising that this program attracted a considerable number of students who appeared to have little commitment to teaching.

5.1.3. Teaching in anticipation of one's life trajectory

The third cluster of reasons that reflected little sense of personal agency related to expectations of a highly gendered life trajectory — as encapsulated by the following explanation:

> I'm not terribly career-oriented. I've always known that I want to get married and have a family. One of the things that really made me go into teaching was that I would always be able to be there for my children. My mum was a teacher and she was always there for us. (19 year old female)

In foreshadowing the likelihood of needing "to manage multiple life roles" (Lent et al., 1996, p. 22), responses of this kind (by two female participants from NSW) conceivably could be said to demonstrate some degree of personal agency. From a

feminist perspective, however, these young women's responses suggest little awareness that their decision to teach was based on gendered constructions of women's life and career trajectories and constrained by their traditional views of gender roles and responsibilities (Allard et al., 1995).

5.2. *Constellation 2: teaching as a means of gaining personal agency*

The 16 participants (nine from NSW, seven from Ontario) whose motivation for their career choice fitted within the second constellation saw teaching primarily as a means of fulfilling personal needs and goals. Again, several clusters of reasons were apparent.

5.2.1. *Teaching as a means of empowerment*

Two participants saw teaching primarily in terms of its potential for empowerment. One, a 21 year old indigenous Australian, had "dropped out" of high school at age 15, in part, because of her family's precarious economic circumstances, and was attracted to teaching primarily because it offered the prospect of improving her economic circumstances. Her fiancée was from a similarly educationally and economically disadvantaged background, she explained, and "when we got engaged, I though that one of us had to get some qualifications for the future".

A 37-year-old Ontario participant perceived that teaching offered empowerment of a different kind. She explained:

> My husband left me when my kids were one and two years old. My daughter was two months premature. She was very bright but I just had a mother's sense that there was something wrong — that there was something not quite right with her. Doctors said that there was nothing wrong with her. It was just that I was a single mother, and I couldn't cope with two children. But my son is only 12 months older and I could see that there was a very big difference between them. I knew that there was something severely wrong. So I thought "Well, nobody is going to help me, so I'll have to help myself. So I came back to university so that I could get the tools to help her".

These responses suggest that although relatively few prospective teachers in contemporary Western societies now appear to consider teaching a means of enhancing socio-economic mobility (Shaw, 1996; Su, 1996), teaching can nevertheless offer prospective teachers a potentially empowering professional knowledge base — a motive rarely mentioned in the research literature about prospective teachers' career choice. As well, these responses highlight the importance of congruency or "fit" between life circumstances and what an occupation is perceived to offer (Holland, 1973) — a construct also evident in the following clusters of responses.

5.2.2. *Teaching as a means of meeting emotional / psychological needs*

Three participants (two from NSW, one from Ontario) described their decision to teach as a means of meeting importance emotional and / or psychological needs — needs that they perceived that other career options were unlikely to fulfil. As a 34 year old Australian male commented:

> I wanted work that was meaningful and fulfilling. After the brutalizing effects of working in all male environments, I wanted to move into an area not dominated by males. I wanted a challenging career that was people centered and intellectually stimulating.

Such hopes and expectations are prevalent amongst, but not confined to, prospective "late-entry" teachers who are making a deliberate occupational change (Haipt, 1988; Serow & Forrest, 1994), as the following comment by an 18-year-old shows. This preservice teacher had been misdiagnosed with learning difficulties as a child, and her self-esteem had plummeted as a result. She explained:

> I think that teaching in a childcare center would be a good environment for me. I have to be in a peaceful environment, otherwise I get very stressed. In a child care center, I could be more myself, in the sense of being more relaxed. I wouldn't be stuck at a desk, I wouldn't have to work to schedules and deadlines, I'd be able to spend some time outside, and I would be around kids. I am always more relaxed around kids. My goal would be to have my own child care center eventually. I would build up a center of my own. I think that it would be a great achievement to be able to say "This is mine and this is what I have achieved".

These participants' emphasis on teaching as a good emotional and psychological "fit" highlights the continuing relevance of theories of career choice that underscore the importance of perceived congruency between personality traits, personal histories, qualities and preferences, and the work environment (e.g., Holland, 1973).

5.2.3. Teaching as means of fulfilling lifestyle and / or career goals

Other preservice teachers (four from NSW, two from Ontario) perceived teaching primarily as a way to fulfil their lifestyle and / or career goals, with the opportunity to travel featuring strongly. In general, these participants considered a wide range of possible occupations before settling on teaching as the career that they perceived would maximize their chances of attaining their lifestyle and career goals. Their characteristically purposeful deliberation is exemplified by the 34-year-old Ontario man who explained:

> At 29, I got married, and it seemed like my last chance to make a major shift — from things that were just jobs into something that was going to be a career. I tried to name a job that would be everything that I wanted it to be and got nowhere. So I turned it around and rather than name a job, I managed to name three criteria that I needed: I needed to like it; I needed to have some basic competence at it; and I had to be paid at least reasonably well for doing it. And I guess all those things were on a sliding scale. If the pay was really good, I could handle liking it a little less than perfectly, as long as it all totaled out.
>
> So then I started listing occupation names. Like "pilot". Do I like it? Yes, I love to fly. Could I be paid reasonably well for it? Yes. Do I have a basic competence? Not enough, because when I took the pilot's entrance exam I couldn't handle the math. Another example would have been photography. Do I like it? Yes. Are you good at it? Yes, I do a fair bit of photography. Can you be paid reasonably well for doing it? Big question mark. It depends — sometimes yes, sometimes not. I had about two dozen jobs on the list. Teaching wasn't very high up that list but it managed to fit an awful lot of criteria.

This response, along with others in this cluster, is consistent with theories of occupational choice that emphasize compensating differentials (see, for e.g., Ginzberg, 1988; McEwan, 1999). Essentially, these theories posit that adults make career decisions after familiarizing themselves with alternatives and eventually arriving at a compromise that will enable them to "utilize their talents and interests in

a manner that will satisfy as many goals and values as possible" (Young, 1995, p. 282).

5.2.4. Teaching as a means of fulfilling a long-held ambition

In stark contrast, the six preservice teachers (three from NSW, three from Ontario) whose responses fitted within this cluster were inexorably drawn to teaching but, other than reiterating their enjoyment of children, had difficulty articulating why they wanted to teach. This "longstanding somewhat unanalyzed, desire to be a teacher" (Young, 1995, p.287) was encapsulated by a 23-year-old Canadian participant who commented: "I've wanted to teach since I was a little girl. I'm not sure why, but I've always enjoyed kids. I just love being around them and interacting with them. And for some reason, kids are just drawn to me". It is in these preservice teachers' responses that the notion first emerges that teaching is "more than simply a choice among available jobs. Rather, "the idea of teaching 'occupies' the person's thoughts and imagination" (Hansen, 1994, p.267), promising personal and professional fulfillment, and thus enhancing one's sense of personal agency.

5.3. Constellation 3: teaching as means of assisting others to gain agency

Many of the eleven participants (all from Ontario) whose responses were included in this constellation also referred to a long-held ambition to teach. In contrast to the responses in the previous cluster that referred only to anticipated personal fulfillment, these preservice teachers indicated that they had "in view more than their own satisfaction" (Hansen, 1994, p. 263). Using terms like "vocation" and "calling", they seemed to approach teaching "in a spirit of service" (p. 273) and from a desire to "contribute to and engage with the world" (p. 267).

Vocation, as Hansen (1994, p. 259) explains, has both personal and public dimensions. It entails feeling "inexorably drawn to an activity that yields potentially lifelong fulfillment", a pull that originates not from selfishness but from "a strong and persistent disposition to be of service to others". These dual themes of personal fulfillment and public service are reflected in the comment: "I feel that to teach, you're touching a life. I'm not in teaching for the money. I'm in it because I thoroughly feel I want to do it. With teaching, I can use my compassion and empathy" (25 year old male). Teaching as service to others seemed to be interpreted in one of two distinct ways.

5.3.1. Teaching as a means of making a difference to children's lives

For seven prospective teachers, service primarily meant making a difference to children's lives. They were optimistic that they could make school a positive experience for all children. One preservice teacher noted:

> I really believe that as a teacher, I could make a difference... by recognizing a behavior problem as more than a behavior problem, for example. By recognizing where the child is coming from and how that relates to their work or their abilities. Are they frustrated? Are they scared? Are they hungry? I care a lot. I care about more than just what they can do in the classroom in terms of their reading. (25 year old female)

Many of these participants sought to compensate for hindrances that they perceived impeded children's ability to progress through the educational system. As one preservice teacher said:

> What I'm seeing is that the parents are not highly educated and they are not fluent in English, so they are not able to help their children much. And you know, it really hurts me to see that, because that having that help would *really make a difference to their kids.* And I want to do something about it by trying to help these children get ahead in the classroom.
>
> (25 year old female)

They also hoped to influence children's life trajectories:

> It was probably the fact that I could help shape the future of kids from the earliest stages of their life [that attracted me to teaching]. To me, education is the only thing that can really get you through life and successfully bring you from one side of the spectrum to the other. It brought me out of where I was and now I can be a middle class parent... .I don't have aspirations for everyone to become middle class but I would hope that you could at least give them the skills to get out and get a job and feel valuable to society as opposed to just staying at home and thinking 'Well, this is the only life for me because it's what my parents have had and it's what everyone else I know has'. (25 year old female)

Reflecting a strongly humanistic perspective based on a commitment to caring (Noddings, 1984), these responses focused on enhancing individual children's well-being, assisting them to overcome perceived disadvantage, and enabling them to become capable and contributing members of society. They suggested a concern with promoting individual empowerment through educational achievement, rather than "collective empowerment through political action" (Shaw, 1996, p. 340). Although these prospective teachers seemed aware of the educational inequities encountered by some of the children from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds with whom they had worked, they did not appear to question, for example, *why* socio-cultural diversity frequently results in inequities.

5.3.2. Teaching as a means of contributing to society

The responses of the four prospective teachers in this cluster differed from those in the previous cluster in their explicit focus on the contribution these participants envisioned making to society. Frequently, they referred to their appreciation of the support that they had received from their own communities, and of wanting to repay that contribution. As a 23 year old male explained:

> I've always had a lot of energy and I've always found people who have helped me channel that energy profitably, rather than getting myself into trouble, so I've been very thankful for that. I always had adults kind of setting up a system that I could get involved in. And now I really love setting up those systems for kids — like getting kids involved in the food bank. It gives back a lot to the community, it's a lot of fun, and it gives this sense of self worth, and of really doing something worthwhile.

These preservice teachers valued the opportunity that they perceived teaching provided to leave "a legacy":

> Just to contribute, you know? To be part of a life .... They are going to be the people who are going to be in Government when I am older. They will be the people who are taking care of the rest of us. So it's great to be part of their education. (25 year old female)

Implicit in these responses was an expectation that, as teachers, their contribution would focus on enhancing the functioning of society rather than challenging its underpinning premises and foundations. This was surprising, given that several of the

Canadian prospective teachers came from backgrounds of considerable social or educational disadvantage.

5.4. Constellation 4: self as agent of reform

In contrast, the five preservice teachers (three from NSW, two from Ontario) whose responses are included in the two clusters within this final constellation envisaged their contribution in terms of effecting reform, rather than enhancing the functioning of existing educational or socio-political structures. As such, from a critical perspective, their responses could be said to reflect a higher degree of personal agency than those within the preceding constellations.

5.4.1. Teaching as a means of effecting educational reform

The two Canadian preservice teachers whose responses comprised this constellation focused on reforming educational practices. Their own negative experiences of school were instrumental in their goal of creating a more child-centered pedagogy, as the following explanation by a 32-year-old participant illustrates:

> Well, it goes back to my history. I've always had a speech impediment. And one of the things that used to drive me nuts was teachers telling me to sound words out. Because if you don't pronounce them right, if you have to sound them out, you don't spell them right. So some of the experiences that I have had going through the system makes me want to help make the system a little better for the students that fall through it.

She continued:

> I think that the system has to be able to respond more to individual needs than it has in the past. For people who don't fit the average ideal of what a student should be, I think it's very hard. I think that the system has put a lot of obstacles in their way.

Although these preservice teachers were concerned with overcoming inequities perpetuated within educational systems, they did not appear to connect educational change with the possibility of broader socio-political change.

5.4.2. Teaching as a means of effecting socio-political reform

The remaining three participants (all from NSW), on the other hand, saw teaching as an explicitly political activity with the potential to contribute to broader social reform. Their perception of themselves as social activists was exemplified by the response:

> I suppose that I still have dreams of going out and changing the world.... But to change society, we need to change education.... We need a whole new group of people to come into it. People with ideals; people who are prepared to criticize; people who are prepared to rock the boat. (23 year old Australian male)

Another prospective teacher was more explicit about how such broader socio-political change might be achieved:

> My dream is to have my own child care center. I would want it to be out in Western Sydney [an area with a large, culturally diverse population with many pockets of severe socio-economic disadvantage, poorly serviced, frequently referred to disparagingly in the media, and by many residents of the generally far more affluent Northern and Eastern suburbs]. I've been brought up out here in the West. I've seen the trials and tribulations that some families from a low socio-economic background go through. But I also think that there has been a lot of stereotyping of the West. People talk

about "The West this, and the West that". There is a lot of prejudice and there are some really bad things happening. On my last practicum, a teacher in the playground heard two boys talking together in an Asian language and she said "Excuse me, we don't use that language here!" Politicians always talk a lot of rhetoric, especially about multiculturalism, but it's not put into practice. And that's one of the reasons that I would like to teach, and why I want to teach in the West. The West still has a bad name, and I would like to change that perception. (27 year old female)

Both excerpts suggest a willingness to challenge typically unexamined assumptions underpinning educational institutions, structures, and practices, and their role in maintaining existing power relationships and perpetuating socio-economic, socio-cultural, educational and other inequities. They exemplify the tendency of the preservice teachers whose responses fitted within this final cluster to situate educational issues within broader political contexts, and to perceive their role in terms of reforming, rather than perpetuating the status quo.

6. Discussion and implications

The findings of this investigation, like those of many previous studies of prospective teachers' motivations for their career choice, need to be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, the complexity of motivations underlying career choice do not readily lend themselves to attempts to identify relatively discreet aspects of that choice. A second and related limitation, as Hansen (1994, p. 274) points out, is that "one may not be able to describe fully or even very meaningfully one's motives" for choosing to teach. This may have been the case particularly for the NSW participants — in part because most were considerably younger (by an average of 5 years) and thus conceivably less mature than their Ontario counterparts, but also because the entrance requirement for their preservice program did not require them to articulate why they wanted to teach. For some of the NSW preservice teachers, therefore, the interview for this study may have been the first occasion that they had been asked to elaborate upon their reasons for their career choice. Conversely, given the entrance requirements for their program, the Ontario preservice teachers may have become adept at articulating socially countenanced motivations for teaching (Joseph & Green, 1986). Keeping in mind these limitations, what can be learned from this study and what implications might it have for the recruitment of teachers and for teacher education programs?

First, the findings support those of many previous studies that prospective teachers are attracted to teaching, or perhaps more accurately, choose to enroll in teacher education programs, for diverse motivations encompassing a mix of anticipated intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. The findings of this study, however, suggest that the dichotomous intrinsic - extrinsic categorization underpinning many studies of prospective teachers' motivations is likely to cloud our understanding of the complexity of reasons for pursuing a teaching career. A continuum of motivations, such as emerged in this study, on the other hand, encourages a focus on the potential for change and growth, consistent with the intent of teacher education programs. In adopting personal agency as the basis for a continuum, this study extends Huberman's (1993) notions of "active" and "passive" motivations for teaching. In so doing, it offers a more developed, and more flexible, conceptual framework for exploring

preservice teachers' motivations for teaching that might usefully inform future studies.

The continuum has proved less successful, however, in informing, in any definitive way, speculation about a possible connection between altruism and the professional status and material rewards accorded teachers. Superficially, the findings might seem to suggest, perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively, that the relatively high professional status and material benefits of teachers in Ontario may be more likely to attract altruistically motivated prospective teachers than the lower professional status and salaries extended to Australian teachers. An alternative explanation, however, is that where teaching is a high status and financially well-rewarded profession, there may be a larger pool of applicants from which to select prospective teachers who are perceived to demonstrate desirable qualities and attributes. In any case, correlation does not necessarily imply causality, and there might not be any relationship between the status and material rewards of teaching and the apparent tendency of the participants in the Ontario program to be more altruistically motivated than their NSW counterparts.

Nevertheless, the study appears to have several implications for the teacher education programs and the recruitment of teachers. In particular, it reaffirms the inappropriateness of any remaining tendencies to perceive preservice teachers as an essentially monolithic entity and reinforces the need to reconceptualize those aspects of preservice programs that, inadvertently, might still continue to reflect such assumptions. It also reaffirms the importance of encouraging all prospective teachers to reflect on an essential, but often overlooked, question: "Do I really want to become a teacher?" (Zehm, 1999, pp. 38-39). The opportunity to engage in prolonged and informed (re)consideration of one's decision to teach, and to construct, reconstruct and refine images and understandings of one's personal-professional identity and purpose might dissuade prospective teachers from pursuing a teaching career by default or for reasons that represent little more than a "means to an end".

The findings also caution that a potential disadvantage of highly competitive entry requirements enabled by a high demand for places in preservice teacher education programs could be the possibility of inadvertently encouraging applicants to proffer socially sanctioned motivations for teaching and favoring those who do so. Correspondingly, those who see themselves as potential agents of fundamental socio-political reform might be less inclined to apply for entry to such programs. Conceivably, this possibility might explain the relative uniformity in the Canadian participants' responses and the absence of any explicit expression of interest in contributing to broad-based reform. Particular care may be needed, therefore, to ensure that selection procedures in contexts where there is high demand for entry to preservice programs do not assist in perpetuating the general conservatism of the teaching profession.

Conversely, the far less stringent requirements for entry into Australian preservice programs seem likely to result in a much greater diversity in the motivations of teacher candidates. The three NSW prospective teachers who were attracted teaching because of the potential to contribute to socio-political reform arguably demonstrated the highest perceptions of personal agency of all participants in the study. Interestingly, all three had initially been dissuaded from teaching by influential others

who had warned that they would be "wasting their high marks" and that "there was no future in teaching". After pursuing other career options they had eventually enrolled in the preservice program as mature-age students, having realized that teaching remained their preferred career choice. Ontario participants, in contrast, reported a great deal of support for their decision to teach. This discrepancy could suggest that high achieving Australian prospective teachers with strong perceptions of personal agency, having sacrificed status and salary to become teachers, might be more likely to aspire to improving the social good through effecting socio-political reform than prospective teachers in contexts where choosing to teach is relatively well-rewarded and less likely to entail professional and financial sacrifice.

Disturbingly, however, the responses of most of the NSW participants suggested little sense of personal agency, seemingly reflecting the relatively low standing of teachers within the Australian context. If one agrees that education is essentially about enhancing people's ability to "remain as much as possible in control of their lives" (Delors, 1996, p.34), the prospect of preservice programs attracting prospective teachers whose motivations for their career choice appear to demonstrate little evidence of personal agency is indeed ironic. Yet as Hansen (1994, p.274) would argue, ultimately what is important is not so much the lack of vocation expressed by their prospective teachers, but the capacity to "grow into" a teacher's role. Fostering these preservice teachers' sense of personal agency so that they are able to embrace the social responsibilities that teaching entails, therefore, would seem a high priority for their teacher educators. Given that there is little in the current Australian socio-political-cultural climate to suggest that a revaluing of teachers and their work is imminent, this may prove a particularly difficult challenge.

* In NSW, government childcare regulations require the employment of qualified teachers in settings catering for more than for 29 children aged from birth to five years of age. Interestingly, in Ontario, graduate qualifications are not required to teach children aged under three years.

Acknowledgements
This study was made possible by a Macquarie University Travelling Scholar Research grant.

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